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## **Istook Says: “Only Count Americans in Shaping Congress!”**

*Counting non-citizens cost Oklahoma Congressional seat following 2000 U.S. Census*

Washington, DC -- Representative Ernest Istook (R-OK) is co-sponsoring an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would stop illegal immigrants and other non-citizens from influencing the size and shape of the U.S. Congress.

If non-citizens were not included in the formula for allocating seats in Congress, Oklahoma would not have lost a seat after the 2000 census. The current method is prescribed in the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, dividing seats in Congress according to the total population of each state, counting total “persons” rather than total “citizens”. With 18.5-million non-citizens living in America—most of them here illegally—several states are getting extra seats in Congress because they have large numbers of illegal immigrants.

**“It makes a big difference,” Istook said. “This doesn’t change the census, but it changes how we use the information. Just as they do now, census-takers should get a total head count and should give us a total of citizens and a total of non-citizens. But only the citizen number should be used to decide who gets seats in Congress, just as only American citizens are supposed to vote. Nine seats in the U.S. House would have been awarded differently if we’d done this. One state alone—California—got an extra six seats in Congress because so many non-citizens are living there.”**

The other states that benefited from counting non-citizens are Florida, Texas and New York, which otherwise would each have gotten one less seat.

If only citizens had been counted, the nine seats instead would have gone to Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Utah, and Wisconsin.

**“We have a lot of close votes in Congress,” Istook said, “including some close votes involving illegal immigration. It’s scary to think that non-citizens are changing the outcome of those votes. I’d like to give states more incentives to help combat illegal immigration, rather than rewarding them with extra seats in Congress.”**

**“We are witnessing a very dangerous trend. In 1990 eight seats shifted because non-citizens were included. In 2000, that number rose to nine. With more than 2,000 people per day illegally crossing the border by 2010 we’ll probably see at least 10 or 12 seats in Congress awarded differently due to illegal immigration. We’ve got to address this serious problem now before it gets worse than it is already.”**

Census data shows that only 84% of California’s population are American citizens, contrasting with 97% in Oklahoma. The official 2000 census shows 18.5-million non-citizens living in the U.S., and that California’s 5.4-million non-citizens is more than the combined populations of six states (North Dakota, South Dakota, Rhode Island, Vermont, Wyoming, and West Virginia.)

The principal author of the legislation is Rep. Candice Miller (R-MI).